

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 05456 01 OF 02 102045Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 SP-02 STR-04 TRSE-00

LAB-04 SIL-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 L-02

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-06 /085 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0073

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 05456

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EGEN, UK, EEC

SUBJECT: EC MEMBERSHIP RECOMMENDED AND MINISTER OUSTED

REF: LONDON 5332

SUMMARY - HOUSE OF COMMONS APRIL 9 OVERWHELMINGLY APPROVED GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATION THAT UK CONTINUE AS EC MEMBER, AS HAD BEEN EXPECTED. MARGIN OF VICTORY, 396 TO 170, WAS SOMEWHAT GREATER THAN MOST OBSERVERS ANTICIPATED,
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PAGE 02 LONDON 05456 01 OF 02 102045Z

BUT MAJORITY OF PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP) VOTED

AGAINST GOVERNMENT. PRIME MINISTER HAS OTHER PROBLEMS AS WELL. DISSIDENTING INDUSTRY MINISTER HEFFER DELIVERED FORCEFUL SPEECH OPPOSING MEMBERSHIP IN DEFIANCE OF CONDUCT GUIDELINES AND WAS SUMMARILY SACKED. OTHERWISE TONE OF DEBATE WAS GENERALLY RESTRAINED. STRENGTH OF COMMONS' ENDORSEMENT OF EC SHOULD BE BOOST TO PRO-MARKET CAMPAIGN, BUT WILSON'S POSITION IN LABOR PARTY IS WEAKENED, THOUGH BY NO MEANS CRITICAL. THESE DEVELOPMENTS MAGNIFY THE PROBLEMS HE WILL FACE IN TWO WEEKS AT THE SPECIAL LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE AND DURING REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY.

1. THREE DAY EC DEBATE IN COMMONS ENDED EVENING OF APRIL 9 WITH HOUSE VOTING 396 TO 170 IN SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT'S RECOMMENDATION THAT UK CONTINUE ITS MEMBERSHIP. COMMONS VOTE EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS OF ALL BUT MOST OPTIMISTIC PRO-MARKETEERS AND SHOULD PROVIDE BIG BOOST FOR PRO-EC REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN (LAST NIGHT'S MAJORITY WAS MORE THAN TWICE AS LARGE AS THAT OF OCTOBER 1971). WHILE PRIME MINISTER WILSON CARRIED COMMONS OVERWHELMINGLY, HE FELL SEVEN VOTES SHORT OF CARRYING A MAJORITY OF PLP. PRESS REPORTS PLP SPLIT 145/138 AGAINST, WITH 37 GOVERNMENT MINISTERS JOINING ANTI-EC BLOC. OUR CALCULATIONS INDICATE 30 LABOR MPS ABSTAINED, ENSURING THAT ANTI-MARKETEERS DID NOT HAVE CLEAR MAJORITY OF ENTIRE PLP, BUT THIS IS SMALL COMFORT FOR WILSON.

2. WILSON'S FAILURE TO GAIN SUPPORT OF PLP MAJORITY, MOREOVER, WAS NOT HIS ONLY PROBLEM. DISSIDENT INDUSTRY MINISTER ERIC HEFFER CAUGHT SPEAKER'S EYE DURING LATER STAGES OF DEBATE AND CARRIED OUT HIS THREAT TO SPEAK AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT (REFTEL). HEFFER'S ACT OF DEFIANCE, ONE OF THE MORE IMPRESSIVE AND CERTAINLY THE MOST DRAMATIC OF THE ANTI-EC INTERVENTIONS, WAS SWIFTLY FOLLOWED BY RETRIBUTION. FINISHING HIS SPEECH AT 8:30 P.M., HE LEARNED OF HIS DISMISSAL FROM GOVERNMENT BEFORE 10 P.M. PRESS REPORTS THAT WHILE HEFFER HAD EXPECTED THE SACK, LEFT-WING, ANTI-MARKET MILITANTS WERE OUTRAGED OVER HIS DISMISSAL. CONVERSATIONS WITH MORE MODERATE ANTI-MARKETEERS, HOWEVER, HAVE NOT REVEALED ESPECIALLY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 05456 01 OF 02 102045Z

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PAGE 01 LONDON 05456 02 OF 02 102041Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 05456

INTENSE BITTERNESS OVER THE HEFFER AFFAIR, AND THERE ARE NO SIGNS OF FISSURE IN THE CABINET'S UNITED FRONT ON THE RULES OF CONDUCT. LABOR'S ANTI-MARKETEERS GENERALLY REFRAINED FROM ACRIMONY AND PERSONAL ATTACK, AS DID PRO-EC LABORITES, INDICATING LEADERSHIP'S REASONED AND CONCILIATORY APPROACH PRODUCED SOME RESULTS, IF NOT A PLP MAJORITY.

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PAGE 02 LONDON 05456 02 OF 02 102041Z

3. ON BALANCE, WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE WILSON CAME OUT OF THE DEBATE AND VOTE IN A STRONGER POSITION THAN APPEARED LIKELY EARLIER IN THE WEEK. ALTHOUGH HIS FAILURE TO CARRY A MAJORITY OF THE PLP IS DAMAGING (THE CLOSEST PARALLEL WE CAN FIND IS MACDONALD'S 1931 DECISION TO LEAD A COALITION GOVERNMENT IN THE FACE OF STRONG PLP OPPOSITION WHICH ULTIMATELY LED TO HIS OUSTER AS PARTY LEADER -- THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PRESENT CASE, HOWEVER, ARE PROFUNDLY DISSIMILAR) AND WILL INTENSIFY THE DIFFICULTIES HE WILL FACE AT THE APRIL 26 SPECIAL PARTY CONFERENCE, HE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE IN ANY IMMEDIATE DANGER. NEARLY ALL OF THE ANTI-MARKET MILITANTS DISLIKED WILSON BEFORE THE EC CRUNCH, AND THESE DEVELOPMENTS WILL ADD TO THEIR LIST OF GRIEVANCES. AS LONG AS THE CABINET MAINTAINS ITS UNITY IN SUPPORT OF THE CONDUCT GUIDELINES, HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE THEY CAN DO ABOUT THE EC VOTE OR THE HEFFER SACKING OTHER THAN AWAIT AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRING WILSON DOWN.

4. APRIL 10 TIMES ARGUES THAT LAST NIGHT'S VOTE ON EC SHOWED THAT WILSON'S REFERENDUM STRATEGY, AS A MEANS TO HOLD LABOR MOVEMENT TOGETHER, HAD FAILED. WE DO NOT ACCEPT THIS JUDGMENT: FIRST, BECAUSE IT IS BASED ON A FALSE PREMISE AND, SECOND, BECAUSE REFERENDUM SCENARIO HAS NOT YET PLAYED OUT. WILSON DID NOT SEIZE ON REFERENDUM DEVICE IN ORDER TO HOLD MOVEMENT TOGETHER, BUT TO PREVENT THE ACKNOWLEDGED SPLIT FROM BECOMING IRREVOCABLE AND TO PRESERVE HIS OWN POSITION. THIS DISTINCTION IS IMPORTANT. AS TO SECOND POINT, HIS STRATEGY WILL NOT BE FULLY TESTED UNTIL AFTER REFERENDUM RESULTS ARE KNOWN. ADMITTEDLY HE MAY ULTIMATELY FAIL, BUT THE RETURNS ARE NOT YET IN, AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO THINK OF AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY WHICH WOULD NOT HAVE ASSURED EVEN GREATER AND MORE DESTRUCTIVE POLARIZATION. RICHARDSON

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